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ABSTRACT

Effective schools are typically defined as those schools which improve or maintain already-established high levels of student achievement. A number of issues and research needs are raised which relate to the identification of effective schools. Unless the nature of "effectiveness" can be described and agreed upon, researchers face the possibility of identifying variables related to the concept not accepted by those responsible for teaching children. Research, program improvement, school district-wide planning or funding decisions, and rating or ranking schools are all potential purposes for identifying school effectiveness. There is a need for a variety of different measures, for separating school effects from other influences, for selection of an appropriate achievement measure, for means by which scores or other indicators can be aggregated, for defining success related to objectives, and for consistency. The identification of "transition" schools (those emphasizing improved ratings, yet with low achievement scores) and "false negative" schools (with uniformly low ratings on success factors, yet high test scores) is considered. The effects of funding on schools, and the need for data linked to effectiveness indicators are examined. The critical issue suggested is the extent to which a school maximizes its effort to improve each student's potential. (CM)

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ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH EDUCATORS, PARTICULARLY EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS, HAVE BEEN CONCERNED WITH EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS FOR MANY YEARS, A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON THE QUESTION "WHAT MAKES SCHOOLS EFFECTIVE?" HAS OCCURRED ONLY RECENTLY. THE NUMBER OF ARTICLES ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS OR SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY. AT THE 1982 AMERICAN EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION MEETING, FOR EXAMPLE, SEVEN DIFFERENT SYMPOSIA ON THE TOPIC OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS WERE PRESENTED.

THE GREAT MAJORITY OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RELATES TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF THOSE VARIABLES COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH SCHOOLS. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT TRUE IN ALL INSTANCES, EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS ARE TYPICALLY DEFINED AS THOSE SCHOOLS WHICH IMPROVE OR MAINTAIN ALREADY-ESTABLISHED HIGH LEVELS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. THE SEARCH FOR NEW VARIABLES CONTINUES, AS DOES RESEARCHERS' ATTEMPTS TO CONDUCT FURTHER INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF THOSE VARIABLES WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED AS RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT. ALTHOUGH RESEARCH INTO THE IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF THOSE VARIABLES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE CONTINUES TO BE IMPORTANT, WE ALREADY HAVE MORE THAN A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF INFORMATION IN OUR ARSENAL TO BEGIN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTPUT. AS RONALD EDMONDS HAS POINTED OUT, "THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME IN THE LIFE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS WHEN WE HAVE NOT KNOWN ALL WE NEEDED TO IN ORDER TO TEACH ALL THOSE WHOM WE CHOSE TO TEACH".

THIS PRESENTATION DOES NOT DEAL WITH VARIABLES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE. NOR DOES IT ATTEMPT TO PRESCRIBE NEW METHODS OR PROCESSES TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS WHICH RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED TO BE VALUABLE IN IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT. WHAT IT DOES, INSTEAD, IS TO RAISE A NUMBER OF ISSUES WHICH RELATE TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS.

THE QUESTION TO BE ADDRESSED HERE IS "HOW DO WE DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL AND A SCHOOL THAT IS NOT EFFECTIVE?" STATED ANOTHER WAY, THE QUESTION MAY BE PHRASED AS "HOW DO WE KNOW ONE WHEN WE SEE IT?"

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS QUESTION IS AMONG THE MOST CRITICAL MEASUREMENT QUESTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RESEARCH INTO EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS. UNLESS THE ISSUES RELATED TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS ARE IDENTIFIED AND RESOLVED, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BUILD A DEFENSIBLE RESEARCH STUDY GEARED TOWARD IDENTIFYING SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES. UNLESS THE NATURE OF "EFFECTIVENESS" CAN BE DESCRIBED AND AGREED UPON, RESEARCHERS FACE THE POSSIBILITY OF IDENTIFYING VARIABLES WHICH MAY RELATE TO THE CONCEPTION OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL NOT SHARED OR ACCEPTED BY THOSE EDUCATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR TEACHING CHILDREN.

FOR EXAMPLE, ONE MIGHT DEFINE AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL AS ONE WHICH INCREASES ALL OF ITS STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY IN LATIN BY A SET LEVEL. IF, HOWEVER, LATIN IS NOT PART OF THE CURRICULUM, IS THE

SCHOOL THEN CONSIDERED INEFFECTIVE? THIS IS BUT ONE EXAMPLE OF THE MULTIPLE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS. THE FOCUS OF THIS PRESENTATION WILL BE TO RAISE ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND TO BRIEFLY DISCUSS EACH OF THESE ISSUES WITH RESPECT TO THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO FURTHER RESEARCH.

ISSUES

1. THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFICATION

THE ISSUE HERE IS WHY ARE SCHOOLS BEING IDENTIFIED AS EFFECTIVE OR INEFFECTIVE? THE PURPOSE FOR SUCH CATEGORIZATION MAY DIRECTLY AFFECT A NUMBER OF OTHER ISSUES, INCLUDING ACHIEVEMENT MEASURES, AGGREGATION, AND DEFINITION OF EFFECTIVENESS. THIS ISSUE ALSO RELATES TO THE GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFINING EFFECTIVENESS.

THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE PURPOSES.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF SCHOOLS ARE BEING IDENTIFIED AS EFFECTIVE OR INEFFECTIVE FOR PURPOSES OF RESEARCH, THE DEFINITION OF EFFECTIVENESS MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE RESEARCHER AND DEFENSIBLE WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH COMMUNITY. IT NEED NOT, OF NECESSITY, BEAR ANY RESEMBLANCE TO THAT WHICH IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL DISTRICT.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE REASON FOR IDENTIFYING A SCHOOL AS SUCCESSFUL RELATES TO PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT, EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA MUST RELATE TO THE GOALS OF THE SCHOOL AND MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

A THIRD PURPOSE FOR IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS MIGHT RELATE TO SCHOOL DISTRICT-WIDE PLANNING OR FUNDING DECISIONS. IN SUCH INSTANCES, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA BE

CONSISTENT AMONG ALL SCHOOLS WITHIN THE DISTRICT.

FINALLY, AND, IN MY OPINION, AMONG THE LEAST DEFENSIBLE REASONS FOR IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS, IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RATING OR RANKING ONE SCHOOL AGAINST ANOTHER. ALTHOUGH RANKING CAN BE USED CONSTRUCTIVELY, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT IT IS USED FOR PUNITIVE PURPOSES. IT IS A COMMON OCCURRENCE TO SEE NEWSPAPERS RANK SCHOOLS IN LARGER DISTRICTS, OR COMPARE SCHOOLS WITH OTHERS IN THE REGION OR THE STATE. TYPICALLY SUCH RANKINGS ARE NOT GEARED TO IMPROVEMENT, BUT TO "NEWS VALUE". IN ADDITION, A SINGLE MEASURE, (TYPICALLY A NATIONALLY NORMED STANDARDIZED TEST SCORE), IS USED TO CATEGORIZE EFFECTIVENESS. OTHER MEASURES ARE RARELY INCLUDED.

2. SINGLE VERSUS MULTIPLE MEASURES

THE MOST TYPICAL MEANS OF GAUGING SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IS BY USE OF A SINGLE MEASURE; TYPICALLY THE AGGREGATE SCORE OF THE PUPILS' ATTENDING THAT SCHOOL ON A NATIONALLY NORMED, STANDARDIZED TEST. WHILE SUCH DATA IS CERTAINLY VALUABLE, AND MAY BE THE BEST SINGLE INDICATOR OF EFFECTIVENESS, TO USE IT AS THE SOLE INDICATOR, IS TO TELL BUT A PORTION OF THE STORY.

IN ORDER TO TRULY GAUGE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL, ONE MUST LOOK AT A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT MEASURES. WHEREAS IN THE PAST, MULTIPLE MEASURES WERE SELDOM AVAILABLE, TODAY THEY ARE COMMONPLACE. CONSIDER, IF YOU WILL, SUCH MEASURES AS MASTERY OR CRITERION REFERENCE TEST RESULTS, SUBJECT MATTER GRADES,

ATTENDANCE, MEASURES OF BEHAVIOR, SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES, AND, AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL, PROGRESSION TO A POST HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING EXPERIENCE (BE IT COLLEGE OR OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING). THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE ALL OUTPUT MEASURES.

THERE ALSO EXISTS THE POSSIBILITY TO CONSIDER MULTIPLE MEASURES OF PROCESS AS WELL. PROCESS MEASURES DO TEND TO BE LESS COMMON, HOWEVER, AND SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL DATA IS NOT TYPICALLY AVAILABLE.

3. SEPARATING SCHOOL EFFECTS FROM OTHER INFLUENCES

IN #2 (ABOVE), INPUT MEASURES WERE PURPOSELY OMITTED. THEY WILL, HOWEVER, BE DEALT WITH HERE, FOR THIS ISSUE REFLECTS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INPUT AND OUTPUT. IT IS MY CONTENTION THAT, THOUGH MANY INPUT VARIABLES ARE CONTROLLABLE, THEY SHOULD BE VIEWED SEPARATELY (THOUGH CERTAINLY AS RELATED TO) OUTPUT VARIABLES (SUCH AS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT). SUCH VARIABLES MIGHT INCLUDE PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES, TEACHER-PUPIL RATIO, TEACHER EXPERIENCE, PHYSICAL FACILITIES, LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR, AVAILABLE CURRICULAR MATERIALS, ETC., ETC.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES RELATED TO THIS ONE THAT ARE IMPORTANT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE CERTAIN INPUT VARIABLES THAT ARE NOT CONTROLLABLE, SUCH AS PUPIL SES, RACE, SEX AND RACE OF TEACHERS, COLLEGE ATTENDED BY TEACHER, ETC. SUCH VARIABLES, THOUGH OF ACADEMIC INTEREST, MIGHT JUST AS WELL BE

IGNORED IN RESEARCH OR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS. SINCE THERE IS NO WAY TO LEGALLY ALTER THEM, THEY SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE OTHER THAN AS AN EXCUSE FOR FAILING TO MAKE SCHOOLS MORE EFFECTIVE.

THEY MAY, NEVERTHELESS, REPRESENT A STUMBLING BLOCK IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH. IN SUCH INSTANCES, RESEARCHERS MIGHT WELL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE MATCHING OF POPULATIONS ACCORDING TO THE VARIABLES UPON WHICH THEY WISH TO FOCUS. A BETTER, AND CONSIDERABLY MORE ROBUST APPROACH TO DEALING WITH SUCH QUESTIONS, IS THE USE OF MULT'PLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS, WHICH PERMITS THE PARTIALLING OUT (OR CONTROLLING FOR) THE EFFECTS OF ALL OTHER VARIABLES, WHILE FOCUSING ON THE EFFECT (THE VARIANCE) OF A SINGLE VARIABLE. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO APPROACH SUCH A SITUATION, BUT HAS BEEN USED INCREASINGLY IN RECENT YEARS DUE TO ITS EASY FIT AND "TRACK RECORD" IN ECONOMETRIC INVESTIGATIONS. (FOR A GOOD EXAMPLE, SEE THE "WHAT WORKS IN READING" STUDY CONDUCTED JOINTLY BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA AND THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK IN 1979).

4. SELECTION OF AN ACHIEVEMENT MEASURE

THE ISSUE HERE RELATES TO WHAT TYPE OF ACHIEVEMENT MEASURE IS MOST APPROPRIATE. THIS WILL, OF COURSE, VARY, DEPENDING UPON THE SITUATION. THE IDEAL SITUATION CALLS FOR USING MORE THAN ONE (SUB) SCORE, PARTICULARLY IF BUT A SINGLE

MEASURE IS BEING USED. FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE PRIMARY MEASURE BEING UTILIZED TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS ARE THE RESULTS OF A NATIONALLY NORMED STANDARDIZED TEST, IT IS POSSIBLE, (DESIRABLE IN FACT), TO MAKE USE OF SEVERAL SCORES. SUBTESTS, (FOR EXAMPLE, READING AND MATHEMATICS), MIGHT BE VIEWED INDIVIDUALLY, AS MIGHT THE COMPOSITE OR AGGREGATE SCORE.

ANOTHER, CERTAINLY A MORE POWERFUL WAY, TO MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF A SINGLE MEASURE, IS TO LOOK AT THE ACTUAL SCORE AS WELL AS THE CHANGE SCORE. VIEWING THE CHANGE SCORE NECESSITATES, OF COURSE, HAVING A SCORE FOR AN EARLIER TESTING PERIOD (PREFERABLY THE YEAR BEFORE, OR A POINT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL TERM). THE ADVANTAGES OF DOING SO ARE THAT ONE IS PROVIDED WITH NOT ONLY THE ACTUAL LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT, BUT AN INDICATION OF HOW THAT ATTAINMENT LEVEL HAD CHANGED OVER A SET PERIOD OF TIME.

SUCH SCORES CAN ALSO BE USED IN COMBINATION WITH THE SCORES AND CHANGE SCORES OF OTHER SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS.

STILL ANOTHER WAY OF VIEWING ACHIEVEMENT VIA A SINGLE MEASURE IS TO REPORT THE PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS WHICH FALL WITHIN A SINGLE PERCENTILE BAND, STANINE, QUARTILE, ETC. HERE, TOO, AN OPPORTUNITY IS PROVIDED TO VIEW THE PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS WHOSE CHANGE SCORE FALLS WITHIN A CERTAIN LEVEL. (PLEASE NOTE: A

DISCUSSION OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF REPORTING -- E.G., NATIONAL PERCENTILE RANK, GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORE, NCE, ETC. -- HAS BEEN AVOIDED, SINCE THE TOPIC DOES NOT DIRECTLY APPLY TO THE ISSUES BEING EXAMINED HERE).

5. AGGREGATION

ANOTHER ISSUE RELATES TO THE MEANS BY WHICH SCORES OR OTHER INDICATORS ARE AGGREGATED IN DETERMINING WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL. SOME MIGHT CONSIDER THE IDEAL WAY TO VIEW THE SCHOOL AS AN AGGREGATION OF EACH INDIVIDUAL PUPIL ATTENDING IT, AND TO TAKE THE ENTIRE SCHOOL POPULATION INTO ACCOUNT. I WOULD AGREE WITH THIS, BUT WITH SEVERAL CAVEATS. AGGREGATING, DOES NOT, OF NECESSITY, MEAN AVERAGING. IN MANY INSTANCES, THE AVAILABLE DATA WILL NOT PERMIT SCORES TO BE AVERAGED ACROSS GRADES. EVEN WHEN POSSIBLE, AVERAGING SCORES ACROSS AN ENTIRE SCHOOL MORE OFTEN THAN NOT WILL MASK CRITICAL DIFFERENCES AMONG GRADES AND CLASSROOMS. HENCE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALSO PROVIDE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES ACCORDING TO GRADES AND INDIVIDUAL CLASSROOMS WITHIN GRADES.

EVEN THE AVERAGE SCORE WITHIN A CLASSROOM CAN BE MISLEADING. THOUGH A CLASSROOM WHERE HALF OF THE PUPILS ARE SCORING VERY HIGH AND HALF VERY LOW MAY YIELD AN AVERAGE SCORE APPROXIMATING THE MEAN OR NORM, FEW EDUCATORS WOULD AGREE THAT ALL OF THE STUDENTS IN THAT ROOM ARE BEING EFFECTIVELY SERVED. SUCH A SITUATION IS SIMILAR TO THE MAN THAT DROWNED IN A RIVER WITH

AN AVERAGE DEPTH OF ONE FOOT.

A FINAL WORD WITH RESPECT TO AGGREGATION OF STUDENT SCORES. IN CARRYING OUT RESEARCH ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS, THE MOST POWERFUL TYPE OF INQUIRY IS THAT WHICH ATTRIBUTES ACTUAL MEASURES TO EACH INDIVIDUAL STUDENT, AND THEN CONDUCTS THE ANALYSIS. AVERAGING THE VARIABLE AND THEN ATTRIBUTING THE AVERAGE SCORE TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS DOES NOT PROVIDE AN ACCURATE ASSESSMENT, NOR DOES IT PERMIT PROCEDURES SUCH AS MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS TO UTILIZE THEIR FULL POWER.

6. DEFINING SUCCESS

THE ISSUE OF DEFINING SUCCESS HEAVILY RELATES TO THE ROLE PLAYED BY OBJECTIVES. JUST AS MOST SCHOOL DISTRICTS CLAIM TO HAVE GOALS, SHOULD NOT INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS, WHILE REFLECTING THE GOALS OF THEIR DISTRICT, DEVELOP A SET OF MEASUREABLE SCHOOL OBJECTIVES? IF THIS IS, IN FACT, THE CASE, SHOULD NOT THE ULTIMATE DETERMINATION OF WHETHER A SCHOOL IS SUCCESSFUL OR NOT DEPEND UPON THE EXTENT TO WHICH ITS OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN MET? INSTEAD, SHOULD A SCHOOL'S OBJECTIVES SIMPLY MIRROR THOSE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT? SHOULD RELATIVE SUCCESS BE DETERMINED AGAINST A DISTRICT NORM, OR COMPARATIVE SUCCESS AGAINST THE RESULTS OF OTHER SCHOOLS WITHIN THE DISTRICT?

ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE USE OF OBJECTIVES IN DETERMINING EFFECTIVENESS IS BY DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL PRESCRIPTIONS (ERGO,

OBJECTIVES) FOR EACH PUPIL, AND ASSESSING THE EXTENT TO WHICH PUPILS HAVE MET THOSE OBJECTIVES. IN REPORTING SUCH RESULTS, THE NUMBER AND/OR PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS MEETING OR EXCEEDING THEIR OBJECTIVES (AS WELL AS THOSE FAILING TO DO SO) MIGHT BE REPORTED.

7. CONSISTENCY

THIS ISSUE RELATES TO THE QUESTION: "HOW LONG NEED A SCHOOL MAINTAIN A CERTAIN LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS IN ORDER TO BE SO LABELED?" JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS CONSISTENCY? IT IS CERTAINLY A DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTE, BUT, IS IT NECESSARY AS PART OF THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS? IN ORDER FOR A SCHOOL TO BE CLASSIFIED AS EFFECTIVE, NEED IT HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY INEFFECTIVE OR UNSUCCESSFUL? CAN A SCHOOL THAT HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE FOR SEVERAL YEARS MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO AND STILL BE CALLED EFFECTIVE? (IN SUCH INSTANCES, PUPILS ARE NOT GAINING, BUT MAINTAINING). IS LONGITUDINAL CHANGE NECESSARY? IF SO, OVER WHAT PERIOD OF TIME?

SUCH QUESTIONS RELATE TO A NUMBER OF OTHER ISSUES, INCLUDING THE MEANS OF REPORTING EFFECTIVENESS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF A NATIONAL PERCENTILE RANK OR LOCAL PERCENTILE RANK IS UTILIZED, IT IS CONSIDERABLY EASIER FOR A SCHOOL SCORING AT THE 25TH PERCENTILE TO SHOW IMPROVEMENT THAN A SCHOOL ALREADY SCORING AT THE 85TH PERCENTILE. AND SHOULD THAT SCHOOL AT THE 85TH PERCENTILE DROP TO THE 83RD PERCENTILE, HAS IT NOW BECOME

INEFFECTIVE? NOTICE THAT ON THIS ISSUE, I'VE GOT NUMEROUS QUESTIONS AND FEW DIRECT ANSWERS.

8. IDENTIFYING TRANSITION SCHOOLS

IN HIS STUDY OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READING PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS, ALLAN ELLIS IDENTIFIED FOUR TYPES OF SCHOOLS BASED UPON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEST SCORES AND FACTOR RATINGS. ONE TYPE OF SCHOOL (A FALSE POSITIVE) WAS TERMED BY THE AUTHOR AS A "TRANSITION SCHOOL". TRANSITION SCHOOLS EXHIBIT HIGH FACTOR RATINGS BUT LOW TEST SCORES. SUCH INSTITUTIONS PLACE STRONG EMPHASIS UPON IMPROVING THOSE VARIABLES THAT SHOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE; YET, THEIR TEST SCORES REMAIN LOW. SUCH SCHOOLS WERE CERTAINLY ATTEMPTING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BUT WERE STILL FAILING. THOUGH THESE INSTITUTIONS ARE CLEARLY INEFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF OUTPUT, THEY MIGHT BE RATED AS EFFECTIVE IN TERMS OF EFFORT.

THE CATEGORIZATION OF SUCH SCHOOLS MAY BE RELATED TO THE CONSISTENCY ISSUE, (#7 ABOVE), IN THAT ONE EXPLANATION OF TRANSITION SCHOOLS IS THAT "IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SCHOOLS EXHIBITING SUCH STRENGTHS (I.E., HIGH FACTOR RATINGS) SHOW THEIR TRUE EFFECTS". SUCH A FINDING WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH WEBER'S CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE INNER-CITY SCHOOLS WHICH HE STUDIED. ELLIS, HOWEVER, TENDS TO WITHHOLD HIS JUDGMENT CONCERNING THIS EXPLANATION. REGARDLESS, TRANSITION SCHOOLS DO EXIST, AND THE FACT OF THEIR EXISTENCE PRESENTS YET

ANOTHER ISSUE IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND CATEGORIZATION OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS.

9. FALSE NEGATIVES

STILL ANOTHER BYPRODUCT OF THE ELLIS RESEARCH CITED IN #8 (ABOVE) IS THE IDENTIFICATION OF A CLASS OF SCHOOLS WHICH HE TERMS AS "ERSATZ". SUCH SCHOOLS ARE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSITE TRANSITION SCHOOLS, IN THAT THEY EXHIBIT UNIFORMLY LOW RATINGS ON SUCCESS FACTORS, YET HIGH TEST SCORES. THOUGH THESE INSTITUTIONS APPEAR TO BE A CONTRADICTION, THEIR CATEGORIZATION MAY INSTEAD INDICATE SUPPORT FOR A SUGGESTION MADE EARLIER IN THIS PRESENTATION: THAT THE USE OF A SINGLE MEASURE OF ACHIEVEMENT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A SUFFICIENT CRITERION ON WHICH TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL AS BEING EFFECTIVE. THE ISSUE HERE, AS WITH TRANSITION SCHOOLS, IS HOW DO WE DEAL WITH SUCH SCHOOLS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND IN IMPROVING PROGRAMS. ARE THE SCHOOLS REALLY SUCCESSFUL; OR ARE THEY MERELY EFFECTIVE ON A SINGLE MEASURE, BUT INEFFECTIVE IN OTHER, EQUALLY IMPORTANT, AREAS?

10. THE EFFECT OF FUNDING

THE ISSUE HERE CAN EASILY BE PARAPHRASED BY THE TITLE OF ONE OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S LESSER KNOWN NOVELS -- <u>TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT</u>. AMONG THE MORE CONSISTENT FORMS OF EDUCATIONAL MYTHOLOGY IS THE NOTION THAT POURING MORE MONEY INTO A SCHOOL WILL IMPROVE THE PROGRAM AT A LEVEL COMMENSURATE WITH THE INVESTMENT.

WHILE CERTAIN BASIC MINIMUM LEVELS OF FUNDING ARE ESSENTIAL, AND THOUGH ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, IF CHANNELED PROPERLY AND TARGETED TO THOSE AREAS OF GREATEST NEED DO CORRELATE WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, THE RELATIONSHIP DOES NOT, OF NECESSITY, REMAIN LINEAR.

ARMED WITH THIS INFORMATION, SHOULD RESEARCHERS ATTEMPT TO CONTROL FOR PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURE? SHOULD SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANNERS BE SURE THAT ALL SCHOOLS MEET THAT MYSTICAL MINIMUM? AND WHAT, BY THE WAY, IS THE MINIMUM? CONVERSELY, KNOWING THAT FUNDING DOES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE, SHOULD SCHOOLS WITH LESS MONEY BE CONSIDERED EFFECTIVE, EVEN THOUGH THEY PRODUCE SMALLER GAINS? SIMILARLY, SHOULD HIGHLY FUNDED SCHOOLS BE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE AT LEVELS COMMENSURATE WITH THE AMOUNT OF RESOURCES PROVIDED?

11. HARD VERSUS SOFT DATA

IN MANY CASES, THE TERM HARD DATA HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH TEST RESULTS. THIS IS UNFORTUNATE, FOR SUCH A DEFINITION WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT NON-TEST DATA, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE QUANTIFIABLE, IS "SOFT". HARD DATA IS CERTAINLY IMPORTANT, BUT, AS WITH MY COMMENTS CONCERNING THE USE OF SINGLE VERSUS MULTIPLE MEASURES, HARD DATA SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS THE SOLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

SOFT DATA, UNFORTUNATELY, HAS COME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH AFFECTIVE, OBSERVATIONAL, ETHNOGRAPHIC, IMPRESSIONISTIC INFORMATION. THE FACT THAT THERE EXISTS MANY HUNDREDS OF FULLY VALIDATED OBSERVATIONAL INSTRUMENTS, WHICH YIELD QUANTIFIABLE INFORMATION, IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED. SOFT DATA IS CERTAINLY QUANTIFIABLE! THE KEY HERE IS LINKING DATA, WHETHER HARD OR SOFT, TO THOSE INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVENESS WHICH ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE PURPOSE OF CLASSIFYING A SCHOOL EFFECTIVE, AND ACCEPTABLE TO THOSE CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH OR ENGAGING IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL PROGRAM.

IN CONCLUSION

I SHOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE WITH AN AREA OF SUCH IMPORTANCE THAT I CONSIDER IT NOT TO BE AN ISSUE AT ALL; BUT A GIVEN. THAT AREA RELATES TO THE MAXIMIZATION OF EFFORT IN IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS, AND IN WORKING WITH ALL SCHOOLS TO MAKE THEM MORE EFFECTIVE.

THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL PROVIDES FOR THE MAXIMIZATION OF EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE POTENTIAL OF EACH STUDENT IN THAT SCHOOL. AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE FOR SUCH MAXIMIZATION IS VITAL, REGARDLESS OF THE AMOUNT OF TIME AVAILABLE TO WORK WITH THE STUDENT, REGARDLESS OF THAT STUDENT'S BACKGROUND, AND REGARDLESS OF THAT STUDENT'S ADVANTAGES OR DEFICIENCIES.

I BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THIS PRESENTATION ARE IMPORTANT IN IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS. THEY SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN CONDUCTING APPROPRIATE RESEARCH INTO WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL, AND WHY CERTAIN APPROACHES ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN OTHERS. EVEN IF A SCHOOL IS LABELED AS EFFECTIVE, HOWEVER, IF IT FAILS TO SERVE ALL OF THE STUDENTS WHICH ATTEND IT IN SUCH A MANNER THAT EACH STUDENT HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAXIMIZE HIS OR HER POTENTIAL, THEN THE SCHOOL, THOUGH RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL, CAN AND SHOULD STILL BE IMPROVED.

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